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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: United Nations Disarmament Information Programme

United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services

Programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Request for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research resulting from the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on the work programme of the Institute for 2005

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The General Assembly, in section III of its resolution 58/272 of 23 December 2003, requested the Secretary-General to report at the main part of its fifty-ninth session on the continuing need for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) from the regular budget of the United Nations, taking into account previous reports and any relevant decisions on the question of subventions.

2. The Advisory Committee has considered the notes by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/59/3 and Corr.1 and Add.1) on the request for a subvention of $227,600 for 2005 and on the continuing need for this subvention to UNIDIR resulting from the recommendation of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on the work programme of the Institute for 2005.

3. UNIDIR was established in October 1980 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 34/83 M of 11 December 1979 for the purpose of undertaking independent research on issues of disarmament and international security as an interim arrangement within the framework of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). The General Assembly in section IV of its resolution 37/99 K of 13 December 1982 on institutional arrangements relating to the process of disarmament, provided that the Institute should function as an

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autonomous institution, working in close relationship with the Department of Disarmament Affairs, and that its activities should be funded by voluntary contributions from States and public and private organizations. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to give the Institute administrative and other support and decided that the Advisory Board on Disarmament Studies should function as its Board of Trustees. In that capacity, the Advisory Board was mandated to draft the statute of the Institute.

4. The General Assembly approved the statute of UNIDIR by its resolution 39/148 H of 17 December 1984. With regard to the financial arrangements of the Institute, the statute stipulated that voluntary contributions from States and public and private organizations should form the principal source of financing of the Institute and that a subvention towards meeting the costs of the Director and the staff of the Institute might be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations. With a view to ensuring that the Institute not be funded from the subvention alone, it further specified that the amount of the subvention should not exceed an amount equivalent to 50 per cent of the assured income of the Institute from voluntary sources.

5. Over the course of the past 10 years, the subvention has not exceeded 34 per cent of voluntary contributions, and has fallen to approximately 15 per cent in more recent years, well below the 50 per cent ceiling authorized. A subvention of $146,500 was initially provided to UNIDIR in 1985. It was subsequently set to $220,000 in 1990 and then reduced to $213,000 in 1996 owing to system-wide reductions. Following the in-depth evaluation of the disarmament programme by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in 2000 (E/AC.51/1999/2), which indicated an erosion of the value of the subvention in real terms, the General Assembly, in its resolution 55/35A of 20 November 2000, recommended the development of proposals to increase funding of the Institute within existing resources. In this regard, as of the biennium 2002-2003, the subvention was cost-adjusted.

6. In his report A/C.5/59/3/Add.1, the Secretary-General confirmed the continuing need of a subvention and stressed its importance, both for assuring the independence of the Institute and, therefore, an unbiased research programme, as well as for assisting the Director in raising voluntary funds. The Secretary-General also pointed out that the impartiality and independence of the Institute is essential in an area as sensitive as disarmament and international security in order to ensure that the work of the Institute is not compromised, which would inevitably lead to difficulties in attracting further voluntary contributions.

7. In the Secretary-General's report A/C.5/59/3, a subvention of $227,600 was requested from the regular budget of the United Nations to UNIDIR for 2005. The amount represents approximately 15 per cent of the total voluntary funds available in 2005 and has been cost-adjusted to take inflation and currency changes into account.

8. The Advisory Committee accepts the justification provided for the continuing need for a subvention to the Institute from the regular budget of the United Nations. It recommends that the General Assembly approve the request of $227,600 for UNIDIR for 2005 on the understanding that no additional provision would be required under section 4, Disarmament, of the programme budget for 2004-2005.